

Ek Onkar Sri Wahguru ji ki Fateh

**ANATOMY OF THE
Anandpur Sahib Resolution**

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ANATOMY OF THE *Anandpur Sahib Resolution*

No other resolution passed by the Shiromani Akali Dal in the entire span of about half a century and a decade, is so unequivocally worded and based upon such solid foundations as the Anandpur Sahib resolution and yet perhaps no other resolution of any political party passed at any time, anywhere has ever been surrounded by such a thick cobweb of controversy as this particular Resolution. More unfortunately, some of the associates of the architects of this resolution can be spotted among those of the spirited soldiers who have been engaged in spinning this cobweb which, in turn, has so defaced it that it has now become difficult even for a person well versed in the art of political sophistry to trace its true features, what to say of a lay man. This is the root cause of the public misgivings about this resolution and the difficulties that are being faced to find a solution to the problems emanating from it. Most unfortunately, the accumulated distrust and misgivings about this resolution have generated such a heat that has led to a volcanic formulation on the broad horizon of the entire Indian sub-continent, of which the people here, particularly the Sikhs, have already had a foretaste of its ferocity and which is showing no sign of abatement even after having taken a heavy toll of life, honour & property of well over fifty thousands of Sikhs – men, women and children, a large number of the holy shrines, including the holiest among them, the Akal Takht Sahib and Harmandir Sahib, and an equally large number of volumes of the holy Sikh scriptures.

The echoes of the heart-rending cries of the fractured Sikh families, their raped and ruptured womenfolk and their orphaned children can be still heard by those who are left with even a single living cell in their conscience. What is worse, such a wide wedge has been vertically created between the two traditionally friendly communities, the Hindus and the Sikhs, which may never be possible to fill. If at all, any honest attempt is made to fill this yawning gap, then, this is possible only on the basis of an honest appraisal of the Anandpur Sahib resolution and a proper grasp of its true size and scope.

For such a purpose, it has to be borne in mind that the Resolution is neither the brain wave of misguided men nor the voice of a secessionist, as is being given out by some of the ill-informed or the ill-disposed persons, including Indira Gandhi the Prime Minister of this country. Although the Anandpur Sahib resolution took its final shape after prolonged discussions and deliberations, yet, it is firmly rooted in the history of the Indian sub-continent. As such, it can only be understood in its historical perspective, the broad features of which are:

1. Notwithstanding the geographical compactness of the Indian sub-continent, never in its entire annals has India ever been a single Country, much less a single nation. On the contrary, multiplicity of races, castes, creeds, languages and social and political entities have been having sway over its different parts at different periods of history. Worse still, their mutual relations have ever been marked by mutual animosity and acrimony. By forging the divine testimony on its theory of separateness of castes, Brahminism, deepened schism even in the Hindu ranks to such an extent that they cannot even till today sit together and pray, much less inter-dine. It is for these reasons that Lord Morley referred to India as 'a racial and ethnical museum'. According to census report of the British period more than 200 languages are spoken on the Indian sub-continent and it has greater variety of racial and religious entities than the entire expanse of Europe. According to Magasthenes, a Greek scholar, who visited the Indian sub-continent around 2500 B.C., there were as many as 118 states in Northern India alone, and their

mutual relations were far from cordial. These broad characteristics of the socio-political conditions obtaining in India right up to the advent of the British rule are vouchsafed by later day Chinese tourists like Shuma Chai, Fei-Huan, Chuan-Chuang, Huan-Sang, & Arab scholars and traders like Albruni and Abu-Rehman, as also by the medieval and modern writers of the history of India.

As late as late as in 1888 Sir Johan Strachey, one of the ablest of the British administrators of India in the nineteenth century, with an excellent knowledge of the Country's political and social history made this observation:

“This is the first and the most essential thing to learn about India, that there is not, and never was an India, or even any country of India, possessing according to European ideas, any sort of unity, physical, political, social or religious... That inhabitants of the Punjab, Bengal, the North West Frontier Province, and Madras should ever feel they belong to one great nation, is impossible.

(Ref. Sir John Strachey, India (London: Kagan Paul, 1888), PP. 5-B.)

The very fact that at each and every crucial corner of the course of Indian history, one comes across some traitor like Lal Chand, Jai Chand or Dhian Singh Dogra bears a most eloquent testimony to this bitter truth.

2. This is also a fact that for a very long time, the North Western Part of the Indian sub-continent including Punjab and the Sind Valley formed part of the different Empires that rose and fell in West Asia. Prior to the conquest of Punjab by Ashoka, it was a province of the Assyrian, then Neo-Babylonian and later on the Achaemenid empires. According to the most distinguished historian-philosopher of the twentieth century, Mr. Arnold Toynbee:

“The Mauryan Empire which was the original Indic Universal State, an Indic cultural core was flanked by AN ALIEN PROVINCE IN PUNJAB, which had been subjected to both Syriac and barbarian influences...Similarly, the Guptan Empire, in which the Mauryan was eventually reintegrated possessed an ex-barbarian fringe with an Alien Hellenic tincture in Gujarat and the north west Deccan and a Hellenized fringe with a Kushan Barbarian dilution in the territories under its suzerainty in the Punjab.”

(Ref. Arnold Toynbee: A Study of History, P. 281).

It is in this very historical context that the Punjab, particularly its western parts, has ever been a bone of contention between Persia and Afghanistan on one side and the contemporary reigning powers at Delhi on the other. Right up to the rise of the Sikhs in the eighteen century, many a military actions had to be fought by these contemporary powers to establish their respective claims over Punjab. But for the very bitter struggle put up by the Sikhs, the then emperor of Afghanistan had all but succeeded in annexing the entire area from Peshawar to the banks of Jammuna to his empire.

(Ref. A. C. Banerjee: Evolution of Khalsa, Vol, 11. P. 161).

These hard historical facts clearly vouchsafe that prior to the advent of the British rule in India; it had never been a single country, much less a single nation. In order to forge a united front for the vacation of the British rule from India and to cope with the demands of a modern state, persons like Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru tried to advance the theory of ‘Unity in diversity’ in an integrated order to project the inhabitants of the Indian sub-continent as belonging to an integrated single nation. However, as the theory was not honestly conceived and more dishonestly implemented in practice, leaders of the Muslim minority like Mr. Jinnah, notwithstanding their

initial enthusiasm, very soon got disenchanted, because they found out that it was a very clever move to ensure the hegemony of the vast Hindu majority over the Muslim and other minorities after the removal of the British power from India. The post-1947 experiences of the minorities in India, especially the Sikhs, have fully vindicated the misgivings given vent to by Mr. Jinnah and his like. Thus, the reservations with which the theory of 'Unity in Diversity' is sought to be implemented has not allowed it to make any headway in the process of nation building in India even after more than three decades of self-rule. The late Sh. Jay Prakash Narayan made a frank confession of this fact when he said: "India is still far from being a single nation and a lot more needs to be done to accomplish this goal".

(Ref. A nation in the making by Jay Prakash Narayan, P. 28)

Sh.Nirad Chaudhri a littérateur of world fame endorses this fact in his book 'Continent of Circle', in almost similar terms. However, the theory of 'Unity in diversity' does take cognisance of the plural character of the social structure in India, and incidentally, the basis of Anandpur Sahib resolution is also rooted in this very fact.

3. Prior to the advent of the British on the Indian soil and the annexation of Punjab at their hands in the middle of nineteenth century, the three principal communities which have been at different periods of history, ruling over its vast areas have been the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs. Although, after its victory at Plassey in 1757 A.D., the British power in India had succeeded in establishing its undisputed sway over the rest of the Indian sub-continent by breaking the back of Marathas and the Mughals; yet, in spite of its overwhelming superior resources, it could not muster courage to challenge the supremacy of the Sikhs under Maharaja Ranjit Singh with whom all the then major powers like France, Italy, America, China, Russia, Afghanistan, Iran and, above all the British concluded international treaties in recognition of the eminent status of the Sikhs as an outstanding nation. Thus, even after more than a century of the enslavement of the rest of India, the Sikhs were still the sovereign rulers of a vast empire.

4. After the demise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the loss of the Sikh kingdom was the result of the revoltingly traitorous role of persons like Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh Dogras and Tej Singh and Lal Singh, the Brahmins from U.P. They stabbed in the back of the profound heritage of a trusting and benign Sikh ruler on whose crumbs they sustained themselves and on whose trust they managed to rise to sensitive positions. The stigma of the enslavement of the Sikhs and millions of other people in their kingdom would ever blacken the faces of these persons and many more of their like in his famous book, 'Glimpses of World History'. Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru highlights this very fact when he says, "Even though the Sikhs had inflicted a crushing defeat on the British at Chillianwala, the Sikh nation was sabotaged into submission."

(Ref. Glimpses of World History, P. 412.)

5. With the fall of the Sikh kingdom, the whole of the Indian sub-continent was enslaved and thus, the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs came under a common bondage. However, while the Hindus and the Muslims engaged themselves in efforts to cultivate the goodwill of the British masters for petty concessions, the Sikhs were the first to rebel because, freedom and justice for all, are the quintessence of their socio-spiritual heritage. According to Sir John W. Kaye a distinguished historian of 1857 Revolt in India says, "In no other place in India, had the spirit of nationality so largely survived the subjugations of

the people as in Punjab. There the Sikhs were more likely to rise than any other people in any part of the country.”

(Ref. History of Sepoy War in India, P. 435)

The subsequent events proved Sir John W. Kaye to be prophetically correct because, the Sikhs were again the first to rebel when in 1872, the followers of Baba Ram Singh established a sort of ‘state within state’ by establishing their own courts, their own communication system, their pledge to boycott British goods, and their resolve not to bow before the alien authority. They had to pay a very heavy price. As many as 106 of them were publicly blown to pieces and their preceptor Baba Ram Singh was deported to Rangoon where he died in exile. However, the forces could not crush the Sikh’s passion for freedom and very soon thereafter, echoes of the famous song ‘PAGRI SAMBHAL JATTA’ ‘Redeem your honour O ye brave son of Punjab’ were being heard all over Punjab. The call for freedom was again led by Sikhs as is vouchsafed by the then Secretary of State for India, Mr. Morley’s speech in the British Parliament in which he said: “as a result of the ignominious conspiracy a couple of non-Sikh courtiers of the ‘Sikh Darbar’ including Gulab Singh Dogra of Kashmir, became willing and villainous partners.” “Even when the Sikhs had inflicted a crushing defeat on the British at Chillianwala, the Sikh Nation was sabotaged in to submission.” (Pt. Nehru, Glimpses of World History, P. 412)

With the fall of the Sikh kingdom, the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs came under a common bondage and common sufferings and common servility brought them closer together. However, of the three, the Sikhs were the first to rebel because freedom and justice are the quintessence of their new territorial acquisitions in Punjab, when Bhai Maharaj Singh raised the standard of revolt as early as 1847. But, because of loss of eye sight he was betrayed by some traitors into the hands of the rulers who deported him to Singapore where he died in exile in jail. S. Attar Singh Attariwala was another Sikh to revolt soon thereafter but, this was too lone a fight to succeed against a mighty power. However, these incidents gave an indication of the Sikhs’ passion for freedom and in them British rulers saw the potential danger to their in India. Sir John W. Kaye, a distinguished historian of the 1857 revolt, says in his book, History of the Sepoy War in India (Page, 435) that “In no other place in India had the spirit of nationality so largely survived the subjugations of the people as in Punjab. The Sikh inhabitants were more likely to rise than any other people in any part of the country.”

The subsequent events proved him to be prophetically correct because, the Sikhs were again the first to rebel when in 1872, the followers of Baba Ram Singh established a sort of ‘state within state’ by establishing their own courts, their own communication system, by boycotting British goods and by challenging the imperial authority, although they had to pay a very heavy price for it. As many as 106 of them were publicly blown to pieces and their preceptor Baba Ram Singh was deported to Rangoon where he died in exile. However, force could not crush the Sikhs’ passion for freedom and very soon thereafter, echoes of the now famous song ‘PAGRI SAMBHAL JATTA’ — Redeem your honour O ye brave son of Punjab’ were being heard all over Punjab. The call for freedom was again led by Sikhs as is vouchsafed by the then Secretary of State for India Mr. Morley’s speech in the British Parliament to the effect.

“The active agitation has been virtually confined to the districts in which the Sikh element is predominant.”

(Indian Debates Session, 1907, House of Commons, June 6, 1907)

In 1914, the Ghaddar Party was also almost entirely formed and manned by the Sikhs and its literature was published in Punjabi. Over a hundred of the Ghaddaries the Sikhs entire were hanged, while another large number had to undergo life imprisonment in most trying and cruel conditions. And yet, not a single of them relented even when a mere word or nod of apology could save their lives.

In sharp contrast, when Lala Lajpat Rai was arrested along with S. Ajit Singh in 1907 and deported, he rendered an unqualified written apology to the British Government saying:

“He was innocent and did not associate with persons who to his knowledge advocated anti-Government measures.”

(Satya M.Rai. Punjabi Heroic Traditions, Punjabi University Publication, Page 22.)

Speaking in a similar strain during the course of a lecture delivered on the occasion of the 31st anniversary of Lahore Arya Samaj, Swami Shardhanand, the most prominent Arya Samajist, had said —

“I believe that for another three hundred years the British supremacy alone can ensure peace and order in this Land and that if this guarantee of peace was taken away all facilities for advancement on evolutionary lines would vanish.”

Sir Gokal Chand Narang, another eminent Arya Samajist writing in ‘The Civil and Military Gazette’ had said in 1910,

“The Arya Samaj has never preached the gospel of excommunication of foreigners. It has been conscious of the blessings of the security of life and property it enjoys under Pax Britannica...”

As late as 1915, even Mahatma Gandhi speaking at Madras Law Dinner had said —

“It gives me greatest pleasure to declare my loyalty to the British Empire and my loyalty is based upon very selfish ground, I discovered that the British Empire Ideals under which every subject of the British Empire has the freest scope possible for his energies and honour and whatever he thinks is due to his conscience. I think that this is not true of the other governments. I have more than once said that government was the best which governed the least and I have found that it is possible for me to be governed least under the British Empire. Hence my loyalty to the British Empire.”

This attitude of the Hindus was thus in sharp contrast to the mood of the Sikhs who were burning with passions to free their Land from the alien rule even at the cost of the supreme price. The Muslim attitude was only marginally different from that of the Hindu as is evident from the two historic speeches of Sir Syyed Ahmad Khan delivered by him at Meerut on 26th November 1887 and 16th March 1888 respectively in which he advised the Muslims to eschew anti-government activities.

Thus, when the Hindus and the Muslims were trying to cultivate the goodwill of the British Government for gaining some minor concessions for their respective communities as for example, in Minto Morley Reforms, 1909, Lucknow Pact 1916, Montague-Chelmsford Reforms and Govt. of India Act, 1919, the Sikhs, fired with the passion of freedom were facing bullets and mounting gallows. The very fact that in the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy, in 1919 of a total of 1,300 casualties, as many as 799 were the Sikhs gives an idea of their mood and the extent of their involvement in the

struggle for freedom, especially when it is taken into account that their total population in India was less than one per cent and in Punjab was also less than 13 per cent.

In the non-co-operation movement as well started by the Indian National Congress in October 1920, according to Trivysus,

“The Sikhs acted as the spearhead of the Congress forces.”

On May 1921, the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee passed a resolution, “Not to co-operate with the British Government and exhorted the Sikhs to boycott British goods thus set the pace for a prolonged struggle against the alien British rule.” The first phase of this struggle was concluded with the freeing of the holy Sikh shrines from the corrupt Mahants aided and abetted by the British Govt, to which Gandhi remarked:

“The first battle for India’s independence has been won.”

And the Indian National Congress at its annual session held at Gaya in January, 1922 passed a Resolution recording with ‘pride and admiration its appreciations of the exemplary bravery of the Sikh martyrs and the great and noble example of non-violence set by them for the benefit of the whole Nation.’

After it whether it was the formation of the Quit India Movement, the formation of the Indian National Army, the Quit India Movement, the Mutiny of the Indian Navy, Strike of the Delhi Police in 1946, the Sikhs accounted for the agitators. For example, more than 50% of the 20,000 persons who joined the I.N.A. were the Sikhs, in the Quit Indian Movement. Similarly, more than 70% of the total participants from Punjab were again the Sikhs, although they constituted less than 13% of the total populations of Punjab then.

(History of Punjab S. Khushwant Singh, Vol II, P. 245).

The following table gives a vivid picture of the sacrifices made by the Sikhs for throwing out the alien British rule from India: —

S.No.	Punished suffered	Sikhs	Non-Sikhs	Total
1.	Hanged	93	28	121
2.	Imprisoned for life	2147	499	2646
3.	Killed at Jallianwala Bagh	799	501	1300
4.	Killed at Budge Budge Ghat	67	46	113
5.	Killed in Kooke revolt	106	Nil	116
6.	Killed in Akali Movement	500	Nil	500
7.	Grand Total	3712	1074	4786

Most impressive as these figures are they are yet only a part of the total price paid by the Sikhs for the emancipation of this Country. These figures do not include the contributions made by the Sikhs towards organising the Indian National Army, the Naval Mutiny and the Strike of the Delhi Police. Thus there is hardly any field of activity connected with the Freedom Struggle in

which the Sikhs were not in the vanguard and in which they had not contributed far beyond their numbers.

This is however only one phase of the gallant and epoch making saga for freedom written by the Sikhs with their blood and tears. The other, though not of their seeking, i.e. yet more poignant and tragic. Putting their unflinching faith in the categorical assurances given by the leaders of the Indian National Congress including Mr. Jawahar Lal Nehru and Mr. Gandhi that 'the division of the country would not be accepted under any circumstances' and that, according to Mr. Gandhi, vivisection of India would be 'vivisection of myself', the Sikhs stuck to their guns and opposed the division of India tooth and nail. However, when they had staked everything on these crucial issues, they were abandoned midstream by the Hindu Congress leaders who decided to accept the partition of India to be able to sit in the chairs of power because, the prospects of enjoying the fruits of political power in their life time were receding with the advancing years of their lives. Naturally enough, the Sikhs and the Red Shirts of the Congress leaders were caught on the wrong foot and suffered grievously. According to Sh. J.N. Sahni a veteran editor of the 'Hindustan Times' the letting own of the Red Shirts and the Sikhs was not an act of carelessness on the part of the Congress leaders, but, an act of gross and unpardonable betrayal."

(Ref. The Lid Off by J.N.Sahni, New Delhi, 1949, P. 202)

The betrayal by the Congress leaders cost the Sikhs bitterly. About half of their total population was torn apart from their kith and kin, their ancestral homes and hearths, the rich lands they had developed with generations of hard labour and sweet and, above all, from more than 170 of their Holy shrines, including Nanakana Sahib, the birth place of their holy prophet, Sri Guru Nanak dev Ji, Panja Sahib and Dehra Sahib Lahore, the place where their holy prophet Sri Guru Arjan Dev was martyred. In cognizance of these facts the 'Statesman' had written in its leading article, dated January 3rd, 1948:

"A mass transfer of population, a disruption of tradition and economic, relatively harsher and less manageable, the Sikhs have been forced to bear. Probably about 40% of this small but doughty people are in one manner or another describable as refugees. The migration in the main has been from irrigated regions, splendidly fertile, to lands far less productive. Prosperous colonies developed by an industrious and capable Sikh peasantry have been abandoned, as also much other property in rural and urban areas. Besides, some highly revered Sikh shrines are also left on the other side of the border."

Giving a heart rending account of the harrowing sufferings of the Sikhs in the wake of vocation of the British rule. Dr. M. S. Randhawa says in his book 'Out of the Ashes':

"There was price on the head of every Sikh and those who got captured were subjected to diabolical tortures, such as severance of their limbs, removal of eyes and skulls. Children were cut into pieces and their hacked remains thrown into the laps of their mothers."

Even in the face of such savagery, the Sikhs stood firmly on the side of the Hindus as against the Muslim League and upheld the cause of the country. The Minorities sub-committee of the constituent assembly also had to take a special note of the Sikhs suffering for the cause of the country before and after the partition of the Punjab. In its report dated November 23, 1948, it says:

"We are acutely aware of the tragic suffering which the Sikhs suffered before and after the partition of the Punjab. The holocaust in west Punjab has deprived the Sikhs of many

valuable lives and great material wealth. The special tragedy of the Sikhs was that they had also to abandon places particularly sacred to their religion.”

C. Post INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

The Sikhs’ contribution to the cause of preserving the freedom of the Country is as matchless as for winning it. In the post-independence era, the saga of the Sikhs’ heroic role for the greater glory of this Land starts with Kashmir when, in 1948, in an attempt to grab the Valley, the Pakistani hordes and regular forces reached the outskirts of Srinagar Air field, thereby creating a very critical and rather desperate situation for India. The Sikhs once again came to the rescue of the Country, when braving the heaviest of odds, Air Commander S. Mehar Singh (Distinguished Flying Cross) landed the first Dakota with the Sikh soldiers on board on the Srinagar Air field. The Sikh soldiers not only saved the Srinagar airport and the City but, also relentlessly perused the Pakistani invaders up to Baramula and routed them altogether. Capture of Tithwal and Rachhmar were the glorious achievements of the Sikhs in this campaign. In one day’s action at Rachhmar Galli, the Sikhs won as many as 21 gallantry awards, including one Param Vir Chakar, seven Vir Chakars and thirteen mentions in Dispatches. The Sikhs distinguished themselves similarly in the Indo-China and Indo-Pak wars, when they showed their mettle in the battles of Wolorg and Chushul in Ladakh and Chhamb and Haji pir in Kashmir.

In the second Indo-Pak war, the Sikh soldiers captured as many as ten enemy posts in 36 hours in the Chamb sector and thus once again saved Kashmir for India, The part played by the Sikhs in the liberation of Bangla Desh under the Command of Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Arora is too well known to be dwelled at length. Incidentally, the only Martyr in the Goa campaign was also a Sikh.

3. ASSURANCE GIVEN TO THE SIKHS AS ONE OF THE THREE MAIN NATIONAL ENTITIES BEFORE INDEPENDENCE.

As explained earlier, it is a firm and indisputable fact of history that, prior to the advent of British rule in India, three major socio-religious cum political entities had ruled over different parts of this sub-continent at different periods of history namely, the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs. With the annexation of the Sikh Empire by the British in the middle of the nineteenth century, the Hindus the Muslims and the Sikhs came under a common bondage and common sufferings and servility brought them closer together. The common urge to overthrow the burden of the alien rules and the impact of the western political thought held out prospects of wielding of these Peoples into a single Nation but, as this process had not historical and cultural roots, it proved abortive when the Muslims refused to subordinate their individual national interests to the common interests for fear of being ever dominated and dictated by a permanent Hindu majority. The genesis of the creation of Pakistan is rooted in this very historical fact. The Sikhs too had some misgivings but, because of the comparatively more cultural akin-ness with the Hindus and more so, because of the firm, categorical and most solemn assurances held out to them by the Hindu leaders to the effect that in free India the special interests of the Sikhs would be adequately protected through an ‘autonomous’ status and constitutional safeguards for them, they opted for a common cause with the Hindus and did not insist on a separate Homeland of their own. However, although they did not make this extreme demand, they were very anxious as they are even now, to protect that their socio-spiritual and cultural identity as also their basic political interests. For such a purpose, at their insistence their parallel standing as distinct Entity was duly

recognised and always taken into account by the Hindus the Muslims and by the British Govt. during the crucial period when the British Power in India was melting.

During this period, the distinct socio-spiritual identity of the Sikhs was explicitly recognized by the Montagu-Chelmsford report issued in the spring of 1918, Franchise Committee report (Home-Judicial no. 2102. dated November 1918), Government of India Act, 1919, Simon Commission report 1930, Round Table Conference 1931, Ramsay Mc Donald's Communal Award 1932, Government of India Act 1935, Cripps Mission 1942, Lord Wavell's Plan 1944, Cabinet Mission Plan 1946 and Mountbatten Plan 1947, besides of course, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League.

The Congress leaders did at first try to ignore the Separate identity and special interest of the Sikhs as is evident from the Nehru Report 1928, but, when the Sikhs expressed their displeasure and threatened to disassociate from the Congress at this Lahore session in 1929, then it realized its mistake and held out firm and categorical assurances to the Sikhs that their special interests would be fully protected in any future set up and that no constitutional arrangement would be acceptable to the Congress which was not freely acceptable to the Sikhs. These assurances were formally reduced in the form of a resolution, known as the Lahore resolution, which says, *inter alia*:

“As the Sikhs in particular and the Muslims and other minorities in general, have expressed dissatisfaction about the solution of communal question proposed in the Nehru Report, the Congress assures the Sikhs, the Muslims and other minorities that no solution thereof in any future Constitution will be acceptable to the Congress that does not give full satisfaction to the parties concerned.”

(Ref. Indian Constitutional Documents by A.C. Banerjee, Vol II, P. 317)

Incidentally, at this very session the Sikh's national colour was incorporated in the Congress Party's National Flag and Mr. Gandhi reiterated at many different occasions that “The Congress Tri-colour flag stands for Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity.” (Ref. MAHATMA by Mr. D.G.Tendulkar, Vol VII, P. 374) and always referred to Punjab as ‘the only Home of the Sikhs.’ (Ref. MAHATMA by Mr. D.G.Tendulkar, Vol VII, P. 144).

In the Minorities Committee meeting held on 13th November 1931, Mr. Gandhi said:

“I would like to repeat what I have said before that while it will always accept any solution that may be acceptable to Hindus, Mussalmans and the Sikhs, the Congress will be no party to special reservations to or special electorates for any other minorities.”

(Ref. The Indian Struggle by S.C.Bose, P.309)

The very fact that under the British rule, besides the Hindus and the Muslims, the Sikhs alone were covered by the separate electorates proves this point to the hilt. At all crucial meetings like the Round Table Conferences, the Simla Conference, The Cripps Mission 1942, Lord Wavell's Plan 1944, Cabinet Mission talks 1946 and the Mountbatten Plan 1947, the Sikh representatives always sat along with the Hindus and the Muslims for a settlement of the problem as to whose hands the British would transfer political power. During the course of these negotiations, when the Sikhs rejected the Cabinet Mission's proposals, the Cabinet assured the Sikhs that:

“It is inconceivable that any future political set-up can afford to ignore the special interests of the Sikhs.”

Similarly, in the third reading of the ‘Transfer of Power Act 1947’, Sir Stafford Cripps said on 15th July, 1947,

“We hope and believe that those to whom we are now remitting power in India will do their utmost to admit the reasonable claims of the Sikhs, the splendid people who have contributed so much to the life of India.”

It is thus abundantly clear that the Sikhs were recognised as one of the three main national entities prior to and at the time of the transfer of power to the native hands in the Indian sub-continent and all the parties had solemnly committed themselves to safeguard their vital constitutionally as well as otherwise.

It was on the basis of the Sikhs’ standing as one of the three would-be partners in the sovereignty of India after the vacation of the British rule that the Congress leaders held out repeated assurances to them to the effect that after the vacation of the British rule adequate constitutional provisions would be made to safeguard their special socio-political rights to enable them to enjoy a fully autonomous status in free India.

The first such assurance was given to the Sikhs on the eve of the non-co-operation movement started in Oct. 1920. It was on the strength of this assurance that the Sikhs declined to accept Mr. Macleagan’s offer of substantial political weightage if they refuse to lend support to the con-co-operation movement started by the Congress.

The second such assurance was reduced in the form of a formal resolution referred to above, passed at the historic session of the Indian National Congress held at Lahore in 1929. The Commitment contained in this resolution was solemnly reiterated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1931 right in the holy precincts of Gurdwara Sis-Ganj Delhi where he had gone to attend a religious function. On this occasion, S. Madhusudan Singh, voiced the misgivings of a section of the Sikhs that the Congress, once in power, may go back on its assurances, in answer to which Mr. Gandhi said:

“I ask you to accept my word and the resolution of the Congress that it will not betray a single individual, much less a Community. If it ever thinks of doing so, it would hasten to its own doom. I pray you to unbosom yourself of all your doubts and apprehension. Let God be the witness to the bond that binds me and the Congress to you.

I venture to suggest that the non-violence creed of the Congress is the surest guarantee of the good faith and our Sikhs friends have no reason to fear that it would betray them. For, the moment it does so, the Congress would not only deal its own doom by that of the Country too. Moreover, the Sikhs are brave People. They know how to safeguard their rights by the exercise of arms, if it should ever come to that.

(Ref. Young India. dated 19th March 1931)

Speaking in the same strain, Pt. Nehru said at a Press conference on the eve of the All India Congress Committee meeting at Calcutta on 6th July, 1946.

“The brave Sikhs of the Punjab are entitled to special consideration. I see nothing wrong in an area and a set-up in the North where in the Sikhs may also experience the glow of freedom.”

(Statesman, 7th July, 1946).

On another similar occasion, Pt. Nehru in order to reassure the Sikhs gave the following statement:

“Redistribution of provincial boundaries was essential and inevitable. I stand for semi-autonomous units as well. If the Sikhs desire to function as such a unit, I would like them to have a semi-autonomous unit with the province so that they may have a sense of freedom.” (Extracts from Congress records as reproduced in ‘Punjabi Suba’, a National Book Club publication, P. 147)

In this context the resolution adopted by the All India Congress Committee at its meeting held on 5th January, 1947 also voices concern for special rights for the Sikhs in Punjab. It says inter alia:

“The All India Congress Committee realize and appreciate the difficulty placed in the way of the provinces like Assam. N.W.F.P. and the SIKHS IN PUNJAB by the British Cabinet Mission Scheme of May 16, 1946 and more especially by the British Govt. in its statements of December 6, 1946. Congress cannot be a party to any such compulsion or imposition against the will of the people concerned. The rights of the Sikhs in Punjab should not be jeopardized.”

The most important and historic declaration in this context is the basic resolution moved by Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru in the opening session of the Constituent Assembly on 9th Dec. 46 in which he categorically assured the minorities that:

- a. The various territories of the Union of India would be autonomous units with residuary powers.
- b. Adequate safeguards would be provided for the minorities. It was a declaration, a pledge, an undertaking before the world, a contract with millions of Indian and therefore in the nature of an oath which we must keep.

(Framing of Indian Constitution, by B. Shiva Rao.)

In a rare gesture of good will towards the Sikhs and in recognition of their just claims, on May 2nd 1947, the Hindu & Sikh legislators from Punjab met at Delhi under the chairmanship of Ch. Lehri Singh and passed unanimous resolution to the following effect:

“This convention of the Hindu and Sikh legislators of Punjab and members of the Central Legislature and the Constituent Assembly has come to the conclusion that the only solution to the political problem in Punjab lies in a just and equitable division of the province and PROVIDING FOR, INTER ALIA, THE PRESERVATION OF THE INTEGRITY AND HOMOGENEITY OF THE SIKH COMMUNITY.”

(Ref. ‘Now it can be told’ by A. N. Bali, P. 65)

Reference may also be invited in this respect to the memorandum submitted by the Indian National Congress to the Boundary Commission at the time of the partition of the Country, which stresses the need to safeguard the special Sikh interests in these words:

“it is essential as much to the peace of the two divisions of Punjab AS TO THE PROTECTION OF THE SIKH CULTURE AND SOLIDARITY that it should be so divided that as many of its areas as is desirable be brought into the Eastern part of the Province.”

(Ref. Punjabi Suba, A Symposium, National Book club Publication, P. 148)

It was on the strength of these assurances and commitment that the Sikhs spurned all offers of the British Govt. and the Muslim League for a Sovereign or semi-Sovereign status analogous to the Hindus and the Muslims.

The first such offer was made by the then Governor of Punjab, Mr. Macleagan on the eve of the non-co-operation Movement in October, 1920. He conveyed the Sikhs Leaders through Capt. Gopal Singh that:

“If the Sikhs refuse to lend support to the non-co-operation movement of the Congress, they would be given 25% reservation in the Punjab Assembly as well as similar reservations in the services.”

The Sikhs not only refused the offer but, according to Tryviscus, ‘acted as the spearhead of the Congress forces.’ The offer was again repeated in 1932, when at the time of the 2nd Round Table Conference the British Govt. through Sardar Bahadur Shivdev Singh, then a member of India’s Secretary of States Council made an informal proposal to the Sikhs that if they disassociate themselves from the Congress, they would be given such a decisive political weightage in Punjab as would lead to their emerging as a third independent element in India after the British transfer of power to the inhabitants of the sub-continent. Master Tara Singh did not even so much as heed the proposal.

(Ref. Sardar Kapur Singh’s address in the Parliament on 6th September, 1965)

In this respect it would also be pertinent to recall that in April 1947, Mr. Jinnah, with the concurrence of the British Cabinet, offered to the Sikhs first through Master Tara Singh and then again through the Maharaja of Patiala an autonomous State comprising of areas lying on the west of Panipat and east of the left bank of river Ravi on the understanding that this State confederates with Pakistan on the following terms:

- a. The Sikhs would enjoy full internal autonomy in this area.
- b. 33 percent seats would be reserved for the Sikhs in Punjab and 20 percent in the rest of Pakistan, High Courts and Supreme Court including.
- c. One of the two Governors or the Chief Minister of Punjab would always be a Sikh.
- d. The Sikhs’ strength in the Army would be at least 40%.
- e. No constitutional arrangement of legal enactment would be enforced if the Sikhs by majority of their votes decided to reject them on ground of discrimination against them. Mr. Jinnah had sound reasons to make this offer because, as he said, in the vein of Muslims-Sikh accord, the partition of Punjab and Bengal would have been averted. He was convinced that the partition of Punjab would not only break the back bone of the Sikhs but, would also cause incalculable harm to Pakistan as well. Master Tara Singh rejected this offer because, he preferred to put his faith in the assurances of the Congress leaders, Maharaja Patiala also declined the offer on the advice of Sardar Patel and Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru.

Again on 12th May, 1947 Lord Mountbatten, Pt. Nehru, Nawab Liaquat Ali Khan and Sardar Baldev Singh flew to London at the invitation of the British Government in search of final solution to the intricate communal problem of India. When the Congress and the Muslim League failed to arrive at a mutual understanding and Pt. Nehru decided to return to India, some influential members of the British Cabinet conveyed to Sardar Baldev Singh that if he stayed behind arrangements might be made.

“so as to enable the Sikhs to have political feet of their own on which they may walk into the current of world History.”

Sardar Baldev Singh promptly divulged the contents of confidential offer to Pt. Nehru and in compliance with the latter's wishes declined to stay back to strike any bargain with the British. He flew back to India along with Pt. Nehru with the following message for the press:

"The Sikhs have no demand to make on the British except the demand that they should quit India. Whatever political rights & aspirations the Sikhs have, they shall have them satisfied through the goodwill of the Congress and the Majority Community."

There is thus abundant historical evidence on record to show that:

1. During the course of struggle for the vacation of the British rule, the Sikhs were recognised as one of the three major national entities, besides, the Hindus and the Muslims.
2. The British Government was favourably inclined to provide the Sikhs an independent political foothold on this sub-continent on about parallel lines of the other two Communities.
3. The Sikhs then had three options before them; to opt for a sovereign status, or to voluntarily align themselves with India or Pakistan on pre-agreed terms enshrined in the Constitutional Documents.
4. Mr. Jinnah was as much keen to woo the Sikhs as the Hindu leaders.
5. The Sikhs preferred to opt for the Hindus not only because of their cultural ties with them but also on account of the firm assurances held out to them to the effect.
6. The Sikhs would be granted a semi-autonomous status in free India with adequate safeguards.
7. No Constitution would be forced on them which was not freely acceptable to them.

BETRAYAL OF THE SIKHS AND ATTEMPTS TO UNDERMINE THEIR SOCIAL, SPIRITUAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS

Thus, as explained in the last installment throughout the struggle for freedom, the Sikhs firmly stood on the side of the Indian National Congress, even in the face of tempting offers of an independent or semi-independent status of their own and cheerfully bore the brunt of the stupendous sufferings and sacrifices in the hope that in free India they would be able to live a life of dignity and honour on the basis of the solemn assurances given to them. For lack of any safeguards for the Sikhs in Cabinet Mission Plan, its acceptance by the Indian national Congress, in utter disregard of its commitment to them in 1929 that 'No Constitutional arrangement would be acceptable to it that does not give them (the Sikhs) full satisfaction, did arouse misgivings in the mind of the Sikhs about the future prospects in free India and as a protest, the Sikhs Legislators decided to boycott the Constituent Assembly. The Congress leaders then pleaded with the Sikhs to reconsider their decision and reiterated their earlier assurances that in the new Constitution the Sikh interest would be fully protected. In his letter dated June 11, 1946, written in reply to a communication from Master Tara Singh the then Secretary of State for India also re-assured the Sikhs that:

"It is inconceivable that either the Constituent Assembly or any future Government of India will overlook the special place of the Sikhs in the province of Punjab."

The Sikhs once again put their faith in the Congress leaders and their representatives agreed to participate in the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly, so that the progress towards the emancipation of the Country is not halted. The first resolution moved by Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru in

the Constituent Assembly assuring the minorities adequate safeguards in the Constitution had added salutary effect to restore the confidence of the Sikhs in the bona-fides of the majority Community. Another resolution moved by Pt. Gobind Ballabh Pant in the Constituent Assembly gave further assurances to the minorities in these terms to win their confidence:

“A satisfactory solution of the question pertaining to the minorities will ensure the health, vitality and strength of the free state of India. The question of minorities cannot possibly be overstated. Unless the minorities are fully satisfied, we cannot make any progress, we cannot even maintain peace in an undisturbed manner.”

The Sikhs’ decision to cast their lot with India and the majority Community must be understood in the light of these facts. No wonder, notwithstanding their stupendous losses in the wake of the partition of the country, the Sikhs looked forward to a safe and secure future in free India. But unfortunately, the subsequent events have completely belied their hopes in the bitterest way possible.

With the ostensible aim of implementing these assurances, the Advisory Committee of the Constituent Assembly constituted a Minorities sub-committee consisting of 26 members on February 27, 1947. S.Ujjal Singh and S. Harnam Singh, the two Sikh members of this committee presented a detailed memorandum on behalf of the Sikhs listing the safeguards to be provided to their Community. The Sikhs’ case for the consideration of the proposed safeguards for them was, however, deferred by the ‘Minorities sub-committee’ on the strange pleas of the uncertain conditions then obtaining in the state of Punjab. The Committee met on April 17, 18 and 19, 1947, and after prolonged and deep discussions decided by an overwhelming majority of votes in favour of statutory provisions for the reservation of seats and services for the minorities, including the Sikhs and for the setting up of a competent and impartial machinery to ensure protection of the rights of the minorities. The Minorities sub-committee submitted its report to the Advisory Committee on July 27, 1947, which accepted the recommendations with minor adjustments.

Sardar Patel described the report as ‘the result of a general consensus of opinion between the minorities themselves and the majority’. However, most astoundingly, the question of overall safeguards to be provided to the Sikhs was again referred by the Advisory Committee on the same plea of the fluid political situation in Punjab.

It was only on February 24, 1948, that the Advisory Committee meeting was held to consider the position of the Sikhs and the safeguards to be provided to them as a minority. For a purportedly expeditious disposal of the Problem, a limited committee of Sh. Vallabh Bhai Patel, Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, Babu Rajinder Prasad, Dr. Ambedkar and K.M.Munshi was formed. Significantly it did not contain any Sikh Member and did not hold any meeting before November 23, 1948 notwithstanding the very important nature of the problem. In this meeting the Shiromani Akali Dal put forward the following demands on behalf of the Sikhs:

- i. The Sikhs should have the right to elect their representatives to the legislatures through separate electorates for their Community.
- ii. In the Provincial legislature of East Punjab 50% of the seats and in the central Legislature 5% should be reserved for the Sikhs.
- (iii) Seats should also be reserved for them in U.P. and Delhi.
- (iv) Scheduled Caste Sikhs should have the same privileges as Hindu Scheduled Castes; and
- (v) There should be statutory reservation of a certain portion of places in the army for the Sikhs.

As against all solemn assurances given by the leaders of the Indian National Congress, the Committee straightaway rejected these demands, not on merits, but on the strange plea that:

“The Sikhs are a highly educated and virile Community with great gifts not merely as soldiers but as farmers and artisans and with a most remarkable spirit of enterprise. There is in fact no field of activity in which they need fear comparison with any other community in the Country, and we have every confidence that, with the talents they possess, they will soon reach a level of prosperity which will be the envy of other communities. Moreover, while in the undivided Punjab they were only 14% of the population, they will form nearly 30% of the population in East Punjab, a strength which gives them, in the public life of the province, a position of considerable authority.”

The conclusions of the Committee were obviously based upon fallacious arguments because,

- (i) The majority community in Punjab namely, the Hindus are more educated than the Sikhs.
- (ii) The Sikh Scheduled Castes suffered as much handicaps as those of Hindus, if not actually more, in economic field particularly.
- (iii) In a system based upon one man one vote, the vulnerability of 30% minority is not materially any less than that of the 14%.
- (iv) The interests of the microscopic minority of Sikhs in States other than East Punjab was not duly taken note of.

However, the sub-committee decided in favour of extending to the Sikhs the principle of reservation of seats with Joint electorates as in the case of other minorities.

The report of the sub-committee and the question of safeguards for the Sikhs as a minority was placed before the Advisory Committee on December 30, 1948, but, a final decision in this regard was again postponed because Sh. Vallabh Bhai Patel had different designs up his sleeves. Before convening the next meeting of the Advisory Committee, he prescribed a newly nominated member to the committee, Begum Aizaz Rasul — once an energetic member of the Muslim league who had to stay back in India after the creation of Pakistan — to propose under strong constraints the abolition of the principle of reservation of seats for the minorities in India. (For fuller details see Dr. K. M. Munshi's Indian Constitutional Documents, Vol. I, P. 207-208). This stage-managed drama sealed the fate of all minorities in India for ever. No wonder, the two Sikhs of the Constituent Assembly S. Hukam Singh and S. Bhupinder Singh Mann refused to append their signatures to the Draft constitution as a protest on behalf of their community which he voiced in these words:

“The Sikhs are told, when they remind the Congress leaders of their pledges in 1929, 1946 and again in 1947 that circumstances have changed. The Sikhs were recognized as one of the three communities in the Cabinet Mission Plan of which the Constituent Assembly is the creation. The only changed circumstance is that the Muslims have got Pakistan. Does it stand to reason that because the Muslims have got Pakistan, therefore the Sikhs have ceased to be a minority? I would be failing in my duty if I do not point out as to what our feelings are. Pakistan resorted to crude positive violence to eliminate their minorities, we are using a subtle and indirect way to finish them.”

Incidentally S. Hukam Singh was not alone in expressing concern about the fate of the minorities in India. Mr. Frank Anthony another eminent of the minority community spoke in the same strain when he said:

“There is a feeling that, today the minorities in India are being oppressed, that the minorities representatives either do not, in fact, represent the minorities, they are petrified by a sense of fear or recrimination and do not speak or express the fears which are in their hearts.”

It may also be pointed out that Dr. Ambedkar had similar misgivings about the future prospects of the minorities in a country dominated by a Communal majority and strongly urged in the meeting of the Advisory Committee that :-

“Safeguards for the minorities having been accepted by the Constituent Assembly, they should not be reconsidered by the Advisory committee”.

However, even he could not come to the help of the minorities.

Having been divested of all safeguards in this manner, the Sikhs found themselves at the mercy of the majority community. They had a fore-taste of the sort of fate they faced in India, when on October 10, 1947 the then Governor of Punjab, Sh. Chandu Lal Trivedi issued a circular letter to all the Deputy Commissioners of the State to the effect that:-

“The Sikhs, as a Community are a lawless people and are, thus, a menace to the law abiding Hindus in the province. Hence, they should be stringently suppressed.” (Ref. Exhibit No. D-11/7 in Supreme Court records pertaining to Application No. 2 of 1956 Vol II, PP 97-119)

That this was not an isolated and ill-conceived opinion of an ill-advised Governor but was part of a sinister design to degrade and demoralize the entire Sikh Community is proved by the subsequent events and attitude of the successive governments in the Centre and State. The highly indiscreet and most provocative remarks made against the Sikhs in public by no less a person than a minister in Central Cabinet. Ms Sushilla Nayar in 1965, gives an indication of the sort of feelings that are harboured at the highest level against the Sikhs. Ridiculing the Sikh way of life and their sacred symbols she said at a public function at Delhi in 1965 that: —

“In the days of the Sikh Gurus, there were no barbers but, there is no dearth of them now”.

In her hatred of the Sikhs, she went to the length of insulting the holy Sikh Prophet Sri Guru Amar Dass ji about whom she said in the same meeting:—

“Guru Amar Dass Performed SEWA (religious service) for twelve years and each year he got a piece of khadi cloth, one and a quarter yard in length, which he regarded as gift from his Guru and used it as his turban. HE WAS UTTERLY NEGLIGENT OF HIS BODY.”

(Ref. Minutes of the 1st meeting between Sant Fateh Singh and S. Lal Bahadur Shastri, the then Prime Minister held on 7th August 1965 at New Delhi), the relevant verbatim portions of which are as under:—

Sant Ji: Even Dr. Sushilla Nayar the Health minister of your Cabinet has outraged our religious sentiments.

Shastri Ji: (Anxiously) What is that? Please do tell me as to what did she say?

Sant Ji: Please listen carefully. She said here in Delhi that in the days of the Sikh Gurus there were no barbers, but now there is no dearth of them, suggesting the Sikhs should shave off. This is how your Minister looks down upon the Sikhs.

Shastri Ji: (In an angry tone. Addressing Sh. Gulzari Lal Nanda, who was also present in the meeting, Why should she utter such words?

G.L.Nanda: I was present on that occasion. Dr. Sushilla Nayar did not say that the Sikhs' hair and beard were now obsolete symbols in modern age, she should not have said these words, we are really sorry that she said them.

Sant Ji: She went even further and made highly derogatory remarks about Sri Guru Amar Dass Ji (Quoted above) Such an unconcealed contempt and malice against the Sikhs as a whole, coming from the mouth of those who are supposed to be custodians of Secularism and in whom the minorities were forced to repose their faith, cannot but be construed as a deliberate and dirty attempt to ridicule the Sikh way of life for its distinctive features and a distinct culture, with the ultimate aim to work for its extinction. It is with this very aim in view that a sort of colonial 'Divide and Rule' was deliberately engineered at the highest level and at the earliest stages of the post-independence era. The correspondence between Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabh Bhai Patel given in annexure No. at Page No. is an irrefutable and most eloquent proof there of.

The official policy towards the Sikhs that pops out these documents is that of promoting divisions in the Sikh ranks in such a manner and to such an extent that they might not be able to put up a united stand on any vital issue and as such might not be able to find a foothold of their own and be ever at the mercy of the Establishment. This policy has so far crystallized in to the following pattern:—

- (i) To play the Sikhs against the Sikhs by creating a strong pro-government lobby amongst their ranks through the baits off seats of Power and Pelf.
- (ii) To dilute and, if possible, even to obliterate the socio-spiritual individual identity of the Sikhs by projecting Sikhs as an off shoot of Hinduism.
- (iii) To wrest control of the holy Sikh shrines through such elements from amongst the Sikhs who would dance to the tunes of the government.
- (iv) To weaken the economic health of the Sikhs and State of Punjab in which they are concentrated with a view to weaken their resolve to safeguard their cultural heritage and reduce them to a state of complete subservience.

The very fact that almost all the Sikhs, with some very rare exceptions, who have donned the Congress Government's chairs at different periods were drawn from the ranks of the Shiromani Akali Dal, shows that they had been tempted away by the baits thrown to them by the Congress Party and its governments as part of their political deigns to divide the Sikh ranks. The manner in which they were molded into instruments to beat the main body of the Sikhs with, is a sad part of the long and sordid story, which has contributed in a big way to precipitate conditions of which the culmination could not but be the tragedy that has not befallen the people of Punjab, more particularly, the Sikhs, It may yet be a little too early for historians to assess its horrible implications at the national level and fix its responsibility on the successive schemers who brought such a colossal national calamity, but the day of reckoning can not be far behind.

Meddling with the religious affairs and institutions of the Sikhs and attempts to undermine their socio-religious identity have been the most provocative and pernicious part of this game. While the Constitution of India was in the making, the volte-face staged by the Congress leaders who had been the loudest in swearing by the promises held out to the Sikhs to grant them statutory safeguards in free India, came as a rude shock to the minorities in general and the Sikhs in particular. Sadder still was the manner in which, at that crucial stage, a double-edged Sword like

policy was adopted towards the Sikhs, for example, to deny their weaker sections the concessions granted to the Hindu counterparts, the Sikhs were termed as different from Hindus but, to impose a Hindu Coe Bill on them they were described by Sardar Patel as a reformed Community of the Hindus (Ref. Framing of India's Constitution by B.Shiva Rao P. 772) and their religious institutions as 'Hindu institutions'.

Similarly, refusal at first to form a 'Punjabi Suba' notwithstanding repeated and categorical commitments of the Congress leaders in favour of linguistic states and the application of this policy in the rest of the Country, and, after its formation forced by the Sikhs' protracted struggle, efforts to stifle its growth by robbing it of large chunks of Punjabi speaking areas, its Capital, its water and power resources and its economic wherewithal are, to all intents and purposes calculated attempts to damage the Sikh interests, because the bulk of the Sikh population is concentrated in the state of Punjab.

Knowing fully well that the Sikhs are a deeply religious Community and their holy Gurdwaras are the fountainheads of their inspiration, the Congress government, in flagrant violation of the provisions of Article 26 of the Constitution of India and the Sikh Gurdwara Act. 1925, embarked on a policy of choking these very fountainheads by gaining control over them through their chosen stooges. The Sikh had gained control of their holy shrines and eliminated official interference in their administration at stupendous sacrifices in men and material both, involving martyrdom of 431 of their devoted souls, brutal injuries to 2,000 more and total arrest of about 30,000 still more, besides the loss of millions of rupees worth properties and pensions of those who revolted in the Army. As such, any interference by the government in their religious affairs injures the Sikh sentiment most. However, totally unmindful of the sentiments of the Sikhs, its own assurances and, above all, the legal and constitutional propriety of their acts, the successive governments, of the Congress party persisted in their baneful efforts to grab control of the holy Sikh shrines and tailor their basic tenets and traditions to suit their political designs.

As part of these very efforts, some arbitrary amendments were made in the Sikh Gurdwara Act as early as 1953-54 even in the face of loud protests by the Shiromani Gurdwara Committee. The climax of such efforts was reached when immediately thereafter, the then Chief minister of the Congress government in Punjab, obviously at he behest of the Centre, floated a new Party called SADH SANGAT to fight the forthcoming Gurdwara elections and geared the entire official machinery and the resources of the state to ensure the success of the official candidates fighting under the banner of Sadh Sangat Board. There was such a wave of resentment among the Sikhs at this naked interference in their religious affairs that they defeated all but four of the official candidates out of a total of 140.

It was hoped that the dismal defeat of the official candidates would serve as an eye-opener to the government, but nay, it persisted in its pernicious efforts rather with a vengeance. In 1957, through an amendment in the Sikh Gurdwara Act, 1925, 13, Pro-Congress members of the PEPSU interim Gurdwara Board were nominated to the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. And, on 16th November, 1958, the then Chief Minister of the Congress Govt, in Punjab foisted his own nominee as the President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee by using the full force of the Government for the purpose. Thereafter, an attempt was also made to take forcible control of the Gurdwara at Delhi as well but, the full resistance put by the Sikhs there frustrated this move.

In order to cry a halt to these disturbing trends and the growing government interference in the religious affairs of the Sikhs, a big meeting presenting all sections of the Sikhs, was called in which it was resolved to hold a mammoth protest rally at Delhi on 15th March, 1959, in an effort to arrest the mounting resentment of the Sikhs on the issue. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, after prolonged discussions with Master Tara Singh, signed what is known as Nehru-Master Tara Singh pact, which says inter alia: —

“It is common ground among all concerned that there should be no government interference in the religious affairs, nevertheless, complaints have arisen of such interference in the past in regard to the Gurdwara management and amendments made in the Gurdwara Act. Some machinery should be devised to ensure the implementation of the policy of non-interference in the Gurdwara management and to consider any complaint of such interference. This Committee should consist of two persons nominated by the Punjab Govt. and two by the President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee...”

This Committee will consider any allegation of interference and will suggest remedial action wherever possible.

Any amendment in the Gurdwara Act, should only be undertaken after obtaining the approval of the General Committee of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee...”

But, notwithstanding such categorical assurances, commitments and Acts, the Govt. of India never abandoned effort to demolish the Sikh Gurdwara Act on one pretext or the other, with a view to gain control of the sacred Sikh shrines. With this very end in view, after the formation of the Punjabi Suba, while many common links were maintained between the new-born States of Punjab and Haryana like, for example the Punjab and Haryana High Court, the Government of India, in utter disregard of Nehru-Master Tara Singh Pact — issued a notification declaring the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee as an inter-states Corporation under section 72 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act, in order to be able to truncate it, even in the face of the unanimous opposition of all the elected members of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee to pass an all India Gurdwara Act — a long standing demand of the Sikhs.

To worsen the matters still further, the governments of India and Haryana sought to impose tax on the voluntary offerings of the devotees to the holy Sikh shrines on the analogy of ‘JAZIA’ of medieval Muslim rulers and the ceilings on the lands attached to the Gurdwaras. It would be relevant to make here a mention of the fact that the landed properties of GAUSHALAS and other such Hindu institutions were exempted from the ceiling restrictions. A more glaring case of discrimination against the Sikhs may be hard to find. Similarly, the move to apply Section 139(4) of the Income Tax Act on voluntary offerings of the devotees to their sacred Shrines is direct interference in the management of the religious and charitable institutions of the Sikhs. It has to be remembered that the Sikh Gurdwaras are managed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, an elected Body under the Gurdwara Act, 1925 and their accounts audited by the government. Moreover, the Gurdwaras do not belong to any individual or group of individuals but, to the Sikh Community as a whole.

On 21st May 1971, the evil intention of the government to wrest control of the Sikh Gurdwaras reveled itself in all its bareness, when the Delhi government took forcible possession of the holy Sikh shrines at Delhi through an ordinance, issued for the purpose. The duly elected members of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara management Committee were arrested and the sacred shrines were placed under the control of a five member Board, all of whom owed allegiance to the Congress (I). The Sikh leadership was forced to wage a peaceful struggle for the vacation of the official control of their shrines, which lasted for 115 days during which about 17,000 Sikhs were

sent to Jails some of whom even lost their lives as a result of brutal repression by the government. Although as a result of this 'Morcha', the government of India was constrained to pass the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Act, and hand over control of the Gurdwaras at Delhi to the elected members, yet it never really abandoned its efforts to control the Sikh shrines through its own stooges installed there by hook or by crook. Its such designs betrayed themselves completely when, on March 20, 1981 the Govt. of India introduced an amendment in the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Act, again through an ordinance and without the concurrence of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, to enable a person of its own choice to be the president of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwaras managing committee. When the amendment came in for discussion in the parliament, the entire opposition and even some members of the Congress (I) Party severely arraigned the authorities for their naked and unabashed interference in the religious affairs of the Sikhs. A Congress (I) member of the Rajya Sabha, K. S. Pant who had piloted the original 'Delhi Gurdwara Bill in 1971, took strong exception to the manner in which the proposed amendment was being forced. Speaking in this very House, Sh. H.S. Surjeet had said, the amendment had been brought because the man Congress (I) wanted to head the Delhi Gurdwara Committee did not have requisite qualifications.

Mr. N. P. Sahi (LOK DAL) alleged that Mr. Zail Singh (then Home Minister) was being used to create a division among Sikh Community. Mr. Jagannath Rao Joshi (BJP), speaking on the amendment had asked the government whether this was a Government step in regard to Auroville or Gurdwara. It did not reflect a healthy process. Changes such as this should be brought about after ascertaining the opinion of the Community concerned. Dr. M. M. S. Sidhu (Janta) said during the same debate, 'the government's job was to see that no Community was divided into warring factions'. In a scathing criticism of the Bill, S. Khushwant Singh, a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha charged the then Home Minister with 'setting a very bad precedent by meddling in the religious affairs of the Sikhs and warned the government that this would cost you a lot of sympathy within the Sikh Community'. S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra and Dr. Rajinder Kaur also criticized the Bill vehemently and asked the government to desist from this naked interference in the religious affairs of the Sikhs. But, the government refused to relent and carried forward the amendment with the help of its brute majority in the Parliament.

The induction of a hand picked and discredited person, Santa Singh, who for a long time past had been totally alienated from the mainstream of Sikhism for his anti-Panthic activities at the behest of the government and, more recently, using him as a cover for the Establishment's sinister designs to usurp the exclusive prerogative of the Sikhs and manage their own sacred shrines through a distinctively and exclusively Sikh institution, known as KAR SEVA and through him, calling of a government sponsored crowd, consisting mostly of the hired non-Sikh hoodlums to sell it out as a SARBAT KHALSA congregation are the latest and the most pernicious of the government efforts to divide the Sikhs and demolish the most sacred of their tradition and institution.

The constituted socio-political unrest in Punjab especially among the Sikhs ever since 1947 and the circumstances leading to the adoption of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution have to be viewed in the light of these facts.

It is, therefore quite apparent that the grievances of the Sikhs and the State of Punjab are not of very recent origin but, have their roots in the deeper past. Ever since the dawn of independence, a sort of step motherly stance was adopted by the Indian Union towards the Sikhs and, on their account, towards the state of Punjab as well, on every issue, be it of honouring

promises solemnly made to the Sikhs, protecting the rights of their weaker sections on the lines granted to the Hindu counterparts, free exercise of their fundamental religious rights, reorganization of the boundaries of Punjab on the linguistic and cultural basis as in the case of other states, granting due status to the Punjabi language and its script, grant of economic aid to Punjab, the distribution of waters of the Punjab rivers, it were always the Sikhs and the state of Punjab which were discriminated against. All the judicial or quasi judicial commissions appointed by the government on any issue concerning the Sikhs and/ or the State of Punjab always gave their verdicts against the merits of their case. For example, while the provincial boundaries on the basis of 13 of the 14 languages [including Punjabi] officially recognised in the Constitution of India were redrawn on the recommendations of the Commissions, the Commission appointed for consideration of the case of Punjabi Suba gave an adverse verdict. Similarly, while the riparian Principle was accepted as the basis for the distribution of inter-states rivers water, Punjab again was made an exception and 75% of the water of its rivers was doled away to other states which are non-riparian.

By the mid-sixties, the Sikh leadership was convinced that the entire apparatus in the Union of India, including the judiciary was contrived to be so heavily biased against the Sikhs that it was impossible to get justice. In spite of strong reservations, the Sikhs, till then, had been hoping that it may yet be possible to get a fair deal under the Constitution arbitrarily imposed on them. But, by then, their hopes were completely belied, and in the inimical attitude of the State, they began to see a serious threat to their socio-religious entity and economic health.

They were convinced that unless radical changes were made in the Constitutional Document, their very existence as such, may be in danger. Master Tara Singh now reopened the issue of implementation of the solemn promises made to the Sikhs by the Indian National Congress leaders before 1947. The Shiromani Akali Dal adopted a resolution on 4th July, 1965 demanding the right of 'self determined political status' for the Sikhs.

On th July 1966, it also adopted another resolution to this effect: —

“After having carefully viewed the findings, the report and judgements of judicial and quasi judicial tribunals and forums that have dealt with matters and cases involving important Sikh interests,

comes to the conclusion that the entire judiciary machinery and judicial process of the independent India has been perverted against the Sikh citizens of India in relation to the just and legal rights.”

At the emergence of these highly inimical trends in the Indian political system vis-à-vis the Sikhs, the Shiromani Akali Dal came to the firm conclusion that it would have to reshape its policies and programmes to safeguard the vital interests of the Sikhs. For formulating these policies and programmes, the Shiromani Akali Dal in its working Committee meeting held on December 11, 1972 set up a sub-committee comprising of S. Surjit Singh Barnala (Chairman). S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra, Jiwan Singh Umranangal, (Late) S. Gurmit Singh, S. Bhag Singh, (Late) S. Gian Singh Rarewala, S. Balwant Singh, S. Prem Singh Lalpura, S. Jaswinder Singh Brar, Major General Gurbakhsh Singh Badhni, Amar Singh Ambalvi and Dr. Bhagat Singh.

This sub-committee had 11 sittings beginning with the first at Amritsar on 23-12-1972. The Committee elicited the co-operation and opinions of a very wide spectrum of the Sikhs, including doctors, lawyers, political thinkers and religious leaders and after prolonged discussions drew up a

unanimous report which was presented before the working committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal at its meeting held at Anandpur Sahib on 16-17, Oct. 1973. The report was unanimously adopted by the working committee and formed the basis of the famous Anandpur Sahib Resolution which read:—

“Whereas, the Sikhs of India are a historically recognised political nation ever since the inauguration of the Khalsa in the concluding years of the 17th century, and

Whereas this status of the Sikh Nation has been internationally recognised and accepted by the major powers of Europe and Asia to wit, France, England, Italy, Russia, China, Persia (now Iran), Afghanistan, Nepal, and the Company of Madras

Fort William since the middle of the 19th century and again by the outgoing British and Hindu Congress and the Muslim League of India in the middle of the 20th century and,

Whereas, the brute majority in India, in 1950 have imposed a constitutional arrangement in India which denudes the Sikhs of their political and cultural popularity, thus liquidating the Sikhs politically and exposing them to death and cultural decay leading inevitably to their submergence and dissolution into the saltish sea waters of inchoate Hinduism, and

Whereas, the Sikhs have been thus shackled and enslaved in unethical and cynical repudiation of solemn and binding commitments and public promises earlier made to the Sikhs, while the Sikh representatives in the Indian Constituent Assembly, in 1950, refused to affix their signatures to the official copy of the Indian Constitution Act thus promulgated, the Shiromani Akali Dal in the name and on behalf of the Sikhs Proclaims that the Sikhs are determined by all legitimate means, to extricate and free themselves from this degrading and death-dealing situation so as to ensure firmly their honourable survival and salvage their inherent dignity in India, and birthright to influence meaningfully the mainstream of world history. The Sikhs, therefore, Demand firstly, that an autonomous region in the North of India should be set up forthwith wherein the Sikh interests are constitutionally recognised as of primary and special importance as the fundamental State policy, Secondly, that this autonomous region include the present Punjab, Karnal and Ambala districts of Haryana inclusive of Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Pinjore, Kalka, Dalhousie, Nalagarh District, Sirsa, Gurgaon and Rania areas and Ganganagar District of Rajasthan, thus bringing main contiguous Sikh population and Sikh habitats within this autonomous Sikh region as an Integral part of the Union of India and Thirdly, this Sikh autonomous region may be declared as entitled to frame its own internal Constitution on the basis of having all powers to for itself except, Foreign Relations, Defence, Currency and General Communications to remain as subjects within the jurisdiction of the Federal Indian Government.

MAY THE RIDER OF THE BLUE HORSE HELP US.”

At this very meeting the working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal took some other decisions of very far reaching consequences. For the first time in its clearest possible terms, the basic postulates of its politics, its goal and the social, political, educational and economic measures it considered necessary for the achievement of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. Referring to them in some details is imperative for a fuller understanding and appreciation of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution.

A. BASIC POSTULATES

1. The Shiromani Akali Dal is the very embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the Sikhs and as such, is fully entitled to its representation. The basic postulates of this Organisation are

Human co-existence, Human welfare and the ultimate unity of all Human beings with the Lord.

2. These postulates are based upon the three great principles of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji namely, NAM JAPO, KIRAT KARO, WAND CHHAKO i.e. Meditation on God's Name, Honest Labour and Sharing the fruits of this Labour with the needy.

B. PURPOSES

The Shiromani Akali Dal shall ever strive to achieve the following aims:

- 1- Propagation of Sikhism, its ethical values and code of conduct to combat atheism.
- 2- Preservation and keeping alive the concept of distinct and sovereign identity of the Panth and building up of appropriate conditions in which the national sentiments and inspirations of the Sikhs Panth will find full expression, satisfaction and facilities for growth.
- 3- Eradication of poverty and starvation through increased Production and more equitable distribution of wealth as also the establishment of just social order sans any exploitation.
- 4- Vacation of discrimination on the basis of caste, creed or any other ground in keeping with the basic principles of Sikhism.
- 5- Removal of disease and ill-health, checking the use of intoxicants and provision of full facilities for the growth of physical wellbeing to prepare and enthuse the Nation for the national defence.

For the achievement of the aforesaid purposes, the Shiromani Akali Dal owned it as its primary duty to inculcate among the Sikhs, religious fervour and a sense of pride in their great Socio-spiritual heritage through the following measures:

- 1- Reiteration of the concept of unicity (Oneness) of God, meditation on his Name, recitation of Gurbani, inculcation of faith in the ten holy Sikh Gurus as well as Sri Guru Granth Sahib and other appropriate measures for such a purpose.
- 2- Grooming accomplished preachers, Ragis, Dhadis and poets in the Sikh Missionary College for a more effective propagation of Sikhism, its tenets and traditions and its basic religious values.
- 3- Baptising the Sikhs on a mass scale with particular emphasis on schools and colleges of which the teachers and the taught shall be enthused through regular study circles.
- 4- Revival of the religious institution of DASWANDH among the Sikhs.
- 5- Generating feeling of respect for the Sikh intellectuals including writers, and preachers who also would be enthused to improve upon their accomplishments.

Streamlining the administration of the Gurdwaras by giving better training to their workers. Appropriate steps would also be taken to maintain the Gurdwara buildings in proper condition. The representatives of the party in the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee would be directed to pull their weight towards these ends.

- 6- Making suitable arrangements for the error-free Publication of Gurbani, promoting research in the ancient and modern Sikh history, translating holy Gurbani into other languages and producing first rate literature on Sikhism.
- 7- Taking appropriate measures for the enactment of an All India Gurdwara Act with a view to improve the administration of the Gurdwaras throughout the Country and to reintegrate the traditional preaching sects of Sikhism like Udasis and Nirmlas, without in any way encroaching upon the properties of their 'maths'.

8- Taking necessary steps to bring the Sikh Gurdwaras all over the world under a single system of administration with a view to run them according to the basic Sikh forms and to pool their resources for the propagation of Sikhism on a wider and more impressive scale.

9- Striving for free access to all those holy Sikh Shrines, including Nankana Sahib, from the Sikh Panth has been separated, for their pilgrimage and proper upkeep.

Apart from defining the basic postulates of its long term policies, the Shiromani Akali Dal also spelled out its political goal in very clear and categorical terms, the broad features of this goal had been laid in the 1973 Resolution adopted at Sri Anandpur Sahib, but a clearer picture of this goal emerged in these terms after years of deliberations over it.

POLITICAL GOAL

The political goal of the Panth, without any doubt, is enshrined in the Commandments of the Tenth Lord, in the pages of the Sikh history and in the very heart of the Khalsa Panth, the ultimate aim of which is the pre-eminence of the Khalsa (KHALSA JI KE BOL BALE).

The fundamental policy of the Shiromani Akali Dal is to seek the realisation of this birthright of the Khalsa through the creation of a geographical entity and a constitutional set-up of our own.

For the attainment of this aim

1- The Shiromani Akali Dal is determined to strive by all possible means to.

- (a)** Have all those Punjabi speaking areas, deliberately kept out of Punjab, such as Dalhousie in Gurdaspur District, Chandigarh, Pinjore, Kalka and Ambala Sadar etc. in Ambala District, the entire Una tehsil of Hoshiarpur District, Shahabad and Guhla Blocks of Karnal District, Tohana sub-tehsil, Ratia block and Sirsa tehsil of Hissar District and six tehsils of Ganganagar District in Rajasthan merged with Punjab to constitute a single administrative unit wherein the interests of Sikhs and Sikhism are specifically protected.
- (b)** In this new Punjab (and other states) the Centre's interference would be restricted to Defence, Foreign relations, Currency and communications, all other departments being in the jurisdiction of Punjab (and other states) who would be fully entitled to frame their own Constitution. For the aforesaid departments of the Centre, Punjab (and other states) would contribute in respective proportion to their respective representation in the Parliament.
- (c)** The Sikhs and other minorities living outside Punjab should be adequately protected against any kind of discrimination against them.

2- The Shiromani Akali Dal would also endeavour to have the Indian Constitution recast on real Federal principles with equal representation at the Centre for all States.

3- The Shiromani Akali Dal strongly denounces the foreign policy of India as framed by the Congress Party. It is worthless and highly detrimental to the interests of the Country, its People and Mankind at large. Shiromani Akali Dal shall extend support to that foreign policy of India only which is based upon the principles of peace and National interests, it strongly advocates a policy of peace with all neighbouring countries, particularly which are inhabited by Sikh Shrines. The Akali Dal is of the firm view that the Foreign policy of India should in no case be one of playing second Fiddle to and other Country.

4- The Shiromani Akali Dal shall resist any discrimination against any Sikh (or even other) employees of the Centre or state governments. It shall also endeavour to maintain the traditional position of the Sikhs in all the wings of the Defence Services and the needs of the Sikh Army personnel shall be adequately taken care of by the Panth. The Shiromani Akali Dal shall also ensure that Kirpan is accepted as an integral part of the uniform of the Sikhs in the Army.

5- It Shall be the primary obligation of Akali Dal to help rehabilitate ex-servicemen of the Defence Forces in the Civil life and for such a purpose, it would extend them every help to enable them to organise themselves so that they are able to raise their voice in an effective way to gain adequate safeguards and concessions for an honourable and dignified life.

6- The Shiromani Akali Dal is of the firm opinion that all those persons, female including, who have not been convicted of any criminal offence by a Court of Law should have been the Right to Possess any type small arms like Revolvers, Guns, Pistols, Rifles and Carbines, etc., without any license, the only obligation being their registration.

7- The Shiromani Akali Dal seeks ban on the sale of liquor and all other kinds of intoxicants and shall press for the ban on the consumption of intoxicants and smoking in public places.

Apart from defining the basic postulates and principles of policies and its ultimate goal, the open session of the General House of the Shiromani Akali Dal held at Ludhiana, also traced the outlines of the long-term socio-economic and cultural aims and objectives of the Party, for the attainment of which, it adopted twelve sub-resolutions. A closer analysis of these sub-resolutions shows that while the core of the basic resolutions passed by its working committee at Sri Anandpur Sahib in 1973, namely the attainment of special Constitutional status for the Sikhs to ensure their growth in accordance with their own socio-spiritual traditions and tenets was fully endorsed by the General House of the Shiromani Akali Dal, the scope of the greater autonomy to the state of Panjab for the aforesaid purpose was widened to include all the States. Thus, the shape and scope of the Anandpur Sahib resolution as it finally emerged out of the Ludhiana meet of the Shiromani Akali Dal envisages:

1. The attainment of pre-eminence of the Khalsa through special constitutional safeguards and powers for the Sikhs.
2. Greater autonomy to all the states by recasting the Centre-states relations on the basis of limited powers for the Centre.

Now, there can be no two opinions about the need and desirability of curtailing the excessive powers of the Centre and the grant of greater and meaningful autonomy to the states because the concentration of Executive power at Delhi has not only stifled the growth of socio-economic health of many regions but has also generated such dangerous trends which may well bring down the entire super-structure of the already perilously perched Democracy in this Country. The way the ruling party at Delhi and more particularly its executive head, the Prime Minister have been nibbling at the powers of the states and gathering all reins of autonomy in their hands has helped the growth of the monster of totalitarianism that has devoured many a democracy in the world and is now threatening the constitutional structure of India as well.

The Constitution of India contains certain provisions which, in the hands of any unscrupulous and self seeking executive Head at the Centre can reduce the states to the position

of a personal Zamindari. For example, even in normal conditions under Article 249 of the Constitution of India on the mere plea of National interests the Centre can assume powers in respect of all the subjects falling under the jurisdiction of the states. Similarly, the Articles 236, 237, 339, 353, 360, etc., empower the Union to issue such administrative directions to the states, non-compliance with any of which entails the suppressions of the defaulting state governments. Again, under Article 3 of the Constitution the Parliament which in actual practice means the Party in power at the Centre or more so its Prime Minister, can even destroy the very identity of a state in such a way as to undermine the ethnic, linguistic, religious cultural homogeneity of a minority inhabiting that state. Likewise, under Article 250 the Centre is competent to bring within its legislative domain all matters falling under the state list, when a state of emergency is in operation. And how easily these arbitrary and sweeping powers at the disposal of the Prime Minister can clear the way for the declaration of a state of emergency was amply demonstrated by the events pertaining to the period 1975-77.

The havoc wrought with the Constitution during this period and the years immediately preceding it through indiscriminate and motivated amendments have changed not only the complexion but even the substance of the original Constitution of the Country thereby making the position of the minorities all the more vulnerable. For example, after the abrogation of Article 31 (1) by Article 31 C, the minorities can be deprived of their properties held privately or upon public, charitable or religious trusts.

(Ref. N. Palkiwala: Constitution Defaced and Defiled. P. 58)

It may also be mentioned here that at the time of the framing of Constitution, the demand for statutory safeguards put forward by the minorities, particularly the Sikhs and the Muslims was turned down on the that the fundamental rights offered sufficient guarantees to the minorities, as they ensured inviolability of certain basic rights and equality before law. However, the manner in which the sanctity and chastity of these fundamental rights has been assaulted and molested by such menacing measures like the Preventive Detention Act 1950, Maintenance of Internal Security Act, 1971, the National Security Act, 1980, and , more recently a whole host of such draconian decrees as the National Security Act (Amendment) Ordinance No. 5 of 1984, the National Security (Second Amendment) Ordinance No.6 of 1984, the Terrorists Affected Areas (Special Court) Ordinance No. 9 of 1984, the Chandigarh Disturbed Areas Act, 1983 and the Armed Forces (Punjab and Chandigarh) Special Powers Act, 1983 that the minorities in India are at the mercy of the majority community bereft of even the most elementary rights like the right to life and equality before law.

Even at the earliest stages of the framing of the Constitution of India, persons with more penetrating visions had the forebodings that the inbuilt weightage in favour of the Centre would eventually lead to the destruction of the Federal structure of the Constitution and pave way for the eventual rise of totalitarianism. On the very day of the enforcement of the new Constitution on 26th January, 1950, no less a person than Sh. Jay Prakash Narayan had remarked —

“Let us not forget that the Constitution that comes into force today and brings Republic into being is in itself a source of greatest danger to both individual freedom and social justice. Therefore at the earliest opportunity a really representative Constitution be conceived to frame which becomes a fit instrument for social democracy.”

More prophetic words were the observations of another Parliament who had said: —

“The Constitution would make the Prime Minister a political dictator. The provision of the suppression of States administrations is a standing invitation and temptation to exercise it at the flimsiest of grounds. This is bound to reduce the States autonomy to a farce. If the President of India is in league with the Prime Minister Commanding the confidence of a majority in the Parliament and is influenced to act on certain confidential but, absolutely unfounded complaints against a state government, the Constitution does not provide any safeguards.”

The manner in which the governments of various states who refused to comply with the extra-constitutional or wiles of the Prime minister have been trampled upon by the Centre brings into bold relief the fact that the neck of every state, particularly the non-conforming one, is ever in the powerful hands of the Prime Minister who may wring it as and when he or she may desire. Such is the fate of constituent state in India today. As such, the need for a close re-appraisal of the Centre-States relations is very much called for and the stress laid on this problem in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution is fully justified.

However, the shifting of emphasis on this aspect in preference to the securing of special status for the Sikhs on the basis of the commitments made to them before 1947 is not a very well thought plan and may defeat the very purpose of the Resolution. More power to all States may in a way harm interests of the Sikhs and other minorities. For example, if a chief minister like Bhajan Lal of Haryana is armed with powers, without securing statutory safeguards for the Sikhs, then, the fate of the Sikhs in states like it is bound to be much worse than what it is today. Hence, instead of espousing the cause of other states, at their cost, the Sikhs need to press for their own special status which is the core of the famous Anandpur Sahib Resolution.

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